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When may one hope to see your *Dissertatio de Bardis**? I am fond of the subject, and have great expectations of your manner of handling it. I thank you for your friend's preface; though he is not much master of English style, the particulars he produces are curious†. I have turned to my learned friend Mr. Lye's edition of *Junii Etymologicon Anglicanum* for the etymology of such words as your friend mentions, and I find nothing, that does not confirm his derivations; I have not time now to descend to particulars, but shall be glad to hear from you as soon as agreeable. One so much master, as you are, of British antiquities, whether historic or poetical, can never want means of entertaining,

dear Sir, your very affectionate servant,

THOMAS PERCY.

P. S. Pray, are the Welsh romances, you have described, in prose or verse? If they are in prose, then let me ask if you have ever seen any in verse? I take it, these subjects were treated in verse before they came to plain prose in most nations‡. This, at least, I find to be the case in the old Erse and Islandic languages, as well as in the more modern Italian, French, Spanish, and English tongues. I have got curious specimens in the last I mentioned. Pray is the word *St. Great*, or *St. Greal*, in the first article of your curious letter§?

LETTERS ON COLL GWYNFA.

LETTER I.

To the EDITOR of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—You have, in the first and third numbers of your miscellany, given a criticism on Mr. Owen Pughe's translation of *Paradise Lost*; and I will venture to express my conviction, that

* This work must have been published soon after this letter was written, as it appeared in the same year.—ED.

† This friend was, most probably, Mr. Lewis Morris.—ED.

‡ Not amongst the Welsh; whose ancient literature possesses this peculiarity, that its poetry is the vehicle of truth and of history, and its prose that of fiction and romance. This has been before noticed in the CAMBRO-BRITON.—ED.

§ There must be an error in the word *saint* here applied to *Greal*; the passage in Mr. Evans's letter had probably reference to the celebrated ancient MS. of that name so unfortunately lost from the Hengwrt library.—ED.

whoever has perused the work, or even the passages, you have extracted from it, must be satisfied as to the justice of your eulogium, however extravagant it may appear to others. But, I am very apprehensive, that this translation, admirable as it is, will want in the present age the popularity it so well deserves; for, to speak plainly, I am afraid it is too good for the Welsh *literati* of these times. Indeed, I have even heard some complain of Mr. Pughe's language, as being too deep and obscure, whereas the fault existed only in the shallowness of their own comprehension.

You have well observed, with reference to the imputed obscurity of *COLL GWYNFA*, that, wherever the author "may appear antiquated, he is only the more classically and more purely Welsh*." I fully concur in this remark, inasmuch as I hold our native language to be essentially different in this particular from all others, considering, as I do, that its energy, harmony, and purity are to be found in the greatest perfection in its most ancient records, and, that whatever it possesses of inelegance or of weakness is all of comparatively modern creation. The nearer, therefore, Mr. Pughe has approached to those early models, the more he has consulted the genuine excellencies of the Welsh tongue. But, there is another point to be considered in relation to this subject, and which has, I believe, been repeatedly urged in the *CAMBRO-BRITON*. I allude to that inborn and inexhaustible fountain, if I may be allowed the expression, from which the language derives so much of its fertility, and its luxuriance†. In the hands of an experienced and tasteful scholar it cannot fail to acquire, from this source, a degree both of copiousness and expressiveness, unequalled in any other tongue, whether modern or ancient, with which I am acquainted. And this quality of the language, it appears to me, Mr. Pughe has exhibited in a remarkable manner in his translation of *Paradise Lost*.

Under these impressions it is that I presume to offer to your readers some extracts from *COLL GWYNFA*, in addition to those which have already appeared. And, in doing this, I shall select some of those passages, which have always been deemed most remarkable in the original. For, such is the general merit of

* See *CAMBRO BRITON*, vol. 1, p. 104.—ED.

† The writer appears here to allude to the illimitable faculty of combination possessed by the Welsh language, before noticed in the *CAMBRO-BRITON*. See particularly vol. 1, pp. 84, & 104.—ED.

the translation, that it becomes almost a matter of indifference from what part of it the proofs of the writer's success are extracted. I will also, with your leave, request, that the original lines may be printed with the version, for the greater readiness of the comparison, and by which means it may be seen, at one view, with what fidelity and with what spirit Mr. Pughe has rendered the great English epic.

The first extract, which has ever been greatly admired, describes the situation of Satan on the burning lake.

“ Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,
With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other parts besides,
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood ; in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareus or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest, that swim th' ocean stream.”—B. i. l. 202.

“ Tra traethai Satan wrth ei gyfnes hyn,
Ei ben oddiar y dôn, a llygaid melltt
Yn lluchedènu, ei aelodau braisg
A hirion, gan onofaw ar y llif,
Amledynt liaws erwi, ac o faint
Y cawr amrosg hwnw à oedd ei han
O ddaiar, yn y chwedlau gynt, ac efe
Yn erbyn Iou á frwydrai, ac ei enw
Briarios oedd neu Typhon, ac ei wâl
Wrth Tarsus hen, neu fo y morfil uthr
Y Lefiathan, mwyaf mil à nawf
Yr eigion à wnaeth Duw.”—P. 8.

Whatever may be the force of the English lines,—and all must admit that Milton has given them as much as his language allowed,—the Welsh are at least equal. The first five lines in particular strike me as superior in this quality. For instance, I think the expression,

“ ——— a llygaid melltt
Yn lluchedènu, ———.”

stronger than the correspondent one in the original ; and, perhaps,

“ Amledynt liaws erwi”

gives a more picturesque idea of the huge bulk of Satan "expanding around" the wide waste of waters than the expression,

"Lay floating many a rood,"

however poetical it may be. The words "morfil uthr," too, seem peculiarly appropriate to the Leviathan.

The next passage I shall select is that, which so strongly depicts the "confused march" of the Satanic legions after the dissolution of their infernal council.

"Thus roving on
In confus'd march forlorn, th' adventurous bands,
With shudd'ring horror pale, and eyes aghast,
View'd first their lamentable lot, and found
No rest : through many a dark and dreary vale
They pass'd, and many a region dolorous,
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,
A universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good ;
Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, unutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd :
Gorgons and Hydras and Chimæras dire."—B. ii. l. 628.

"Mal hyn ar herw
Gan ddryrys daith a syn, y torfoedd hyf
Yn welw o fraw, eu llygaid hyll y drem
A geffynt gyntaf ar eu truan ran,
Heb le i orphwys: treiddient lawer glyn
Oedd wyll a llwm, a llawer nychled fro,
Tros lawer rhewled, llawer tanlled allt,
Craig, ffâu, cau, llyn, cors, rhos, cysgodion a
Bydysawd angyf, hyn trwy reg yn ddrwg
A grëai Duw, da ond i ddrwg, lle mae
Pob byw yn marw, marw yn byw, a nawd
Yn hiliaw gwrth, ac anfertholion oll,
Ffieddiawl, annhraethadwy, ac sy waeth
No dychymygiad chwedlau neu ias ofn :
Ai Gorgon, Hydra, ai Chimæra syn."—P. 51.

It will, probably, be discovered, that in this passage the innate energy of the Welsh language has, in one or two instances, almost raised the translation above the original. Thus, the expression,

“ Mal hyn ar herw
Gan ddryrs daith a syn,”

appears to me more forcible than the English words,

“ Thus roving on
In confused march forlorn.”

It will, likewise, be observed, that the monosyllabic line is very happily rendered*, and particularly, when it is considered, that the Welsh tongue is very far from affording facilities in this respect, while the English, on the other hand, abounds in monosyllables. And Milton has, on several occasions, turned them to great advantage in his endeavours to adapt the representation to the thing represented.

The short extract that follows has been regarded, somewhat fancifully perhaps, as an instance of those attempts, to which I have just alluded, to make the description conformable to the sense. Hence the repetition of the word “death,” at particular pauses of the lines, has been taken to be descriptive of an echo; and, if so, the same merit must be allowed to the Welsh translation, unless the English monosyllable may claim any advantage in this respect over the Welsh word.

“ I fled, and cry’d out Death;
Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sigh’d
From all her caves, and back resounded Death.”—B. ii. l. 789.

“ Fföwn gan
Orlefain Angeu; Uffern crynai rhag
Yr enw hyll, yn ol gan ochi oc
Ei holl ogofau Angeu.”—P. 57.

There is no passage, I conceive, in the whole circle of English poetry more beautiful, more truly descriptive of what it paints, than the following short sketch of Paradise, as viewed by the arch-fiend; scarce a line, but what flows responsive to the particular fascination it was designed to convey: the whole passage is one happy union of beauty, fragrance, and melody. If, therefore, Mr. Pughe may not have come up to his prototype in this instance, he may well be excused; but, I think your readers will agree with me, upon a comparison of his version with the original, that he has acquitted himself, even here, with considerable success.

* A similar instance may be seen in the criticism on this work, vol. 1. p. 100.—ED.

" Thus was this place
 A happy rural seat of various view ;
 Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,
 Others whose fruit burnish'd with golden rind
 Hung amiable, (Hesperian fables true,
 If true, here only,) and of delicious taste :
 Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks,
 Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd
 On palmy hillock ; or the flowery lap
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
 Flow'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose :
 Another side, umbrageous grots and caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
 Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
 Luxuriant ; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
 Down the slope hills, dispers'd, or in a lake,
 That to the fringed bank with myrtle crown'd
 Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
 The birds their quire apply ; airs, vernal airs,
 Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
 The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,
 Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,
 Leads on th' eternal spring."—B. iv. l. 268.

" Efelly dedwydd dirion orsaf oedd
 O amryw sylw y fan hon : coed berth,
 Yn llwyni, a ddagreuent noddion per
 O arogl, ereill llathr eu pillion aur
 A hoff ddibynent, ac o felys chwaeth,
 Os gwir chwedleuon am Hesperia, gwir
 Yn unig yma : rhyngynt oedd aml fron,
 Neu dyno brith o ddëadellau gwâr
 Yn addien bori ; neu flodeuawg ddol
 Amddyfrwys taenai ged o flodau cain
 Amlwion, ac heb ddraen : tu arall aml
 Ogofau oerion a llochesi clyd,
 A rhwysant winwydd gan fagwyaw grawn
 Gorleision arnynt ; rhëdant ar y pryd
 I lawr hyd lethri brônydd ddyfroedd yn
 Orddyar ffrydiau, neu mewn llyn llyfnâant
 Eu drych i lôn glënydd myrtwydd brwys.
 Ban côr yr ednaint ; yn awelu chiwa
 O lwyn a maes, cysona eilon maws
 Y dail ergrynawl, tra arwedddai Nawd
 Teleidion Hion i decâu y twf
 Gwyrëneg bythawl."—P. 101.

Two or three parts of this extract appear to be expressed with a particular felicity : among these are

“ ————— neu flodeuawg ddol
Amddyfrwys taenai ged y flodau cain
Amlwion, ac heb ddraen,”

and also

“ ————— rhêdant ar y pryd
I lawr hyd lethri brônydd ddyfroedd yn
Orddyar ffrydiau.”

In the first example the words “amddyfrwys” and “amlwion” are very judiciously chosen, and are more expressive than the English words which they represent. In the last instance “the fall of the murmuring waters down the slope hills” is also happily described, and may be said almost to be imitated by the rapidity of the lines, unless, indeed, an objection might be made to the word “gorddyar,” which, I believe, is usually applied to any great noise, such as the howling of the wind, or the roaring of the sea, and, therefore, not strictly adapted to the gentle murmuring of a brook. And, if I may be allowed to give another proof of my hypercriticism, I would observe, that the last five lines of Mr. Pughe’s version do not fully convey the idea of the original, although “cysona” is certainly more expressive than “attune,” as implying more emphatically that “concord of sweet sounds,” which the poet intended to describe. However, the blemishes of this passage, whatever they may be, can be of no importance, when opposed to the beauties.

The ensuing extract is of a different nature from the last, but marked by all the characteristic sublimity of the Miltonian muse. It describes the deportment of Satan, when brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and encircled by all the angelic host : and the Welsh reader will discern, through the translation, the merit of the original.

“ While thus he spake, th’ angelic squadron bright
Turn’d fiery red, sharp’ning in mooned horns
Their phalanx, and began to hem him round
With ported spears, as thick as when a field
Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
Her bearded grove of ears, which way the wind
Sways them ; the careful plowman doubting stands,
Lest on the threshing floor his hopeful sheaves
Prove chaff. On th’ other side Satan alarm’d,

Collecting all his might dilated stood,
Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd :
His stature reach'd the sky, and on his crest
Sat horror plum'd ; nor wanted in his grasp
What seem'd both spear and shield."—B. iv. l. 990.

" Tra hebai hyn y dorf engylaidd fflau
Fal tân rhudd, yn llymâu i loerawl gyrn
Eu catrawd, ef dechreuent amgylchâu
Gan waewawr rhagion, tewed â phe maes
I Ceres â wanega addfed lwyn
Ei barfawg dwys, y ffordd y rhwysga gwynt ;
Yr ammaeth o bryderu saif yn brudd,
Rhag ar ei lawr ei ysgub droi yn us.
Tu arall ofnai Satan, a chrynöi
Ei gyflwyr rym gan ymbelaethu, efe
A saif fal Tenerif neu Atlas, na
Symuded : oedd hyd awyr fry ei faint,
Ac ar ei bènial seddai arswyd erch
Ei bluawr ; idd ei angad nid oedd byr
A weddai waew a tharian."—P. 128.

Fearing to trespass more than I ought on your pages, I shall, for the present, close my imperfect notice of what I conceive to be the most prominent beauties of *COLL GWYNFA* ; and, with your permission, I will return hereafter to the subject. In the mean time, I hope I may be allowed, as an admirer of our national literature, to express my gratitude to Mr. Pughe, for having so successfully vindicated the peculiar excellencies of that language, to the improvement and cultivation of which he had before so largely contributed. For I cannot but regard *COLL GWYNFA* as the most classical specimen of the Welsh tongue, which the present age has produced, at the same time that it confers upon Wales the distinction of having furnished the most faithful, and, perhaps, the most spirited translation of the sublimest of all English poems.

LDWAL.

WELSH MUSIC.—No. IX.

To the EDITOR of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—I have had in my possession for many years a printed collection of Welsh airs, foolscap size, the greatest part of the